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TUMOR OF THE PALATE: WHAT ARE THE ODDS OF MALIGNANCY?

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Introduction: Minor salivary gland tumors constitute 20 to 40% of salivary gland tumors, of which 50% are malignant. Half of them take place in the oral cavity, being the palate the most frequent location (42%), followed by the lips (10%) and the oral mucosa (5.5%). Pleomorphic adenoma is the most common benign tumor in the salivary glands, it occurs more frequently in the parotid gland, between the fifth and sixth decade of life and has a higher prevalence in women.

Material and methods: A 47-year-old man presented with a painless mass on the palate of several months of evolution. The physical examination revealed a soft rounded tumor of 3 cm in diameter in the hard palate, with a normal appearing mucosa. A cervical CT scan identified an irregular lesion without bone erosion and ruled out the presence of cervical lymphadenopathies. The FNA (Fine Needle Aspiration) and biopsy performed were inconclusive. After complete excision of the lesion was performed, pathology identified a pleomorphic adenoma, rich in myoepithelial cells, with free margins. The patient had an uneventful postoperative period and remains without recurrences at one year of follow-up.

Discussion: Pleomorphic adenoma generally presents as a painless, slow-growing mass,. When it exceeds 2 cm can cause difficulties with chewing, swallowing and speech. In 23% of the cases it can ulcerate, this finding is suggestive of malignancy. Histologically it presents as a mixed tumor with epithelial and myoepithelial cells accompanied by mesenchymal components that appear organized in complex patterns. Among the differential diagnoses of a mass on the palate we include malignant tumors of the minor salivary glands, especially mucoepidermoid carcinoma, palate abscess, fibromas, lipomas, neurofibromas and lymphomas. A CT scan is necessary to determine the presence of bone erosion and extension of the lesion. The treatment of choice is surgical excision, including the periosteum and/or bone if they are affected. Simple enucleation and tumor rupture during surgery are associated with a high local recurrence rate.